Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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PROJECT BRIEF

Greening the humanitarian response in displacement settings

Ecosystem restoration and sustainable forest management for enhanced energy access and livelihood resilience

Resource partner
DG ECHO

Contribution
EUR 1 200 000

Implementation period
March 2023–February 2025

Key partners
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and key stakeholders at country level

Countries
Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania

Direct target beneficiaries
29 500 people in displaced and host communities

Context

Humanitarian crises, conflict, persecution and climate-related disasters have resulted in more than 100 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.[1] A large proportion is living in overcrowded displacement settings where often scarce natural resources are overexploited leading to land and forest degradation, deforestation, poor nutrition, health risks, protection risks for women and girls, unsustainable livelihoods and heavy workloads. The scale and protracted nature of displacement today, where the sudden and large-scale influx of displaced people is often putting high pressure on already fragile ecosystems, highlights more than ever the importance of adequately analysing and planning the management of natural resources in a holistic and integrated manner.

In this context, forests and trees play a significant role in supporting displaced and host communities as a source of energy, shelter, food and livelihood opportunities, and ecosystem services that can improve the communities' quality of life. They also act as buffers to help withstand extreme weather conditions and other shocks.

FAO's contribution

Over the past years, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been working with partners to alleviate pressure on the environment and support energy access for both displaced and host communities in various parts of the world. FAO's work has included assessing the extent of natural resource degradation around settlements, developing technical guidance on how to accelerate and support forest recovery and regeneration, protect forests and restore degraded land, and aiding energy needs, as well as assisting local stakeholders in the implementation of forest management plans.

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This page: *Elderly women carrrying firewood back to their homes in Kigoma, the United Republic of Tanzania.* ***Previous page:*** *Raham Khatun, a Rohingya refugee, is watering plants inside a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. She has been engaged with FAO's plantation activities since 2018.*

Goal

Strengthen the resilience of displaced and host communities in rural settings through sustainable management of natural resources, forest ecosystems and access to clean and efficient energy sources.

Objectives

- **Increase capacity** of displaced and host communities and local authorities in sustainable management of forests and woodlands.
- **Enhance access to sustainable and clean cooking energy** and to associated efficient technologies for displaced and host communities.
- **Increase access to livelihood opportunities** through sustainable forest-based value chains.

Country-level piloting

The East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes regions hosted nearly 5 million refugees and asylum seekers, as well as 13.5 million internally displaced people at the end of 2022[2] – highlighting the severity of displacement as a result of various crises. An increasing number of people became refugees, driven by conflict, drought, flooding, food shortages, insecurity and localized violence in the region.[2] The ongoing displacement crisis in these regions further exacerbates the strain on already limited resources and infrastructure, leading to additional challenges for both displaced and host communities. The project supports assessments and piloting sustainable forest management interventions in close collaboration with communities, national and local authorities and other key stakeholders in Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

> Local environmental degradation can increase the vulnerability of communities to disasters, the impacts of climate change and have other negative effects on affected communities. An integrated approach to forest management and ecosystem restoration is key to achieving longlasting resilience outcomes.

Project approach

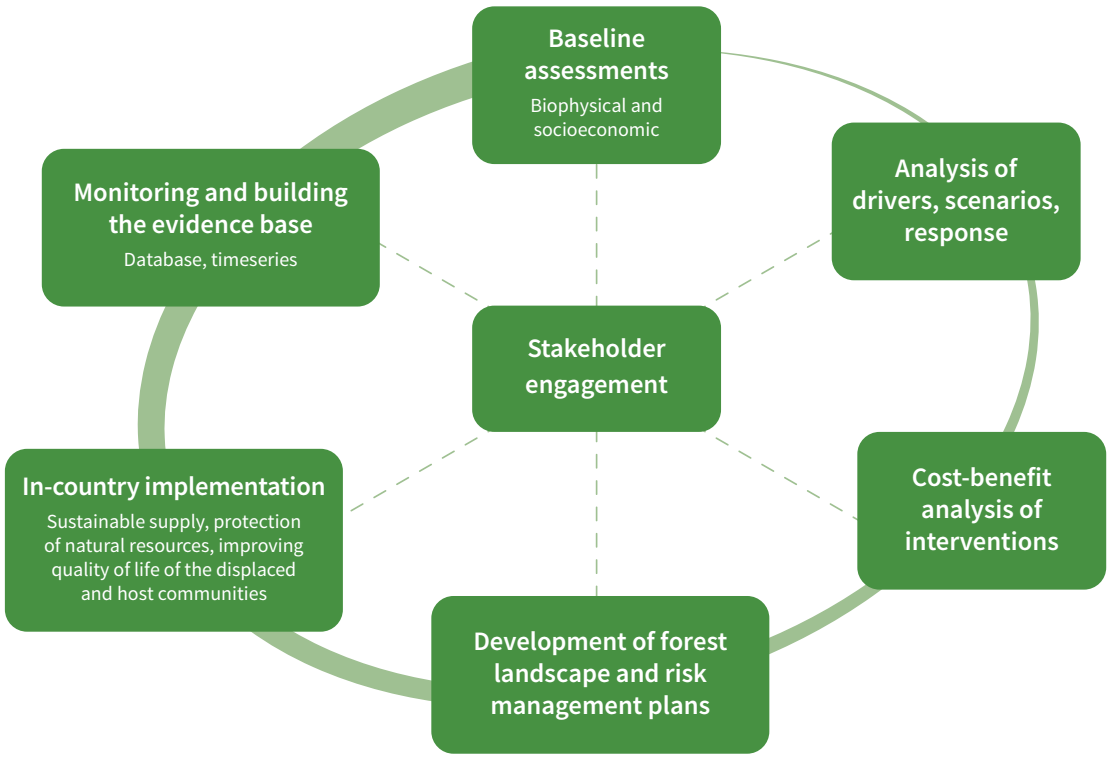
The adoption of a planned approach to forest management and ecosystem restoration in the short and long term is crucial to minimize environmental impact, disaster and climate risks, and tensions and conflicts between displaced and host communities. This can ensure sustainable livelihood opportunities through resilient forest product value chains, including market access and social protection, while promoting the efficient use of natural resources and access to clean, affordable, and efficient sources of energy.

Joint efforts in this multidisciplinary initiative aim to combine emergency assistance with longer-term sustainable development needs. This will be achieved through **sustainable forest management and ecosystem restoration for enhanced livelihood resilience, energy access, and climate risk management.**

Community-level activities will be planned and delivered in collaboration with local actors in an inclusive way, engaging the displaced and host populations through a range of participatory approaches. This initiative represents a further opportunity for scaling up in similar contexts and maximizing positive effects along the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

Charcoal harvesting from an improved kiln in the outskirts of Likolo, Yanonge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Figure 1. Project approach


Baseline assessments
Biophysical and socioeconomic
Analysis of drivers, scenarios, response
Cost-benefit analysis of interventions
Development of forest landscape and risk management plans
In-country implementation
Sustainable supply, protection of natural resources, improving quality of life of the displaced and host communities
Monitoring and building the evidence base
Database, timeseries
Stakeholder engagement

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Outcome

This project is conceived as a global level action that promotes good practices and innovative approaches, enhances existing assessment methodologies and creates the evidence base on environmental impact and related challenges. By creating a livelihood risk management of displaced people and host communities, their productive capacity will be strengthened through skills enhancement in sustainable forest-related production systems and environmental conservation.

The initiative also promotes the adoption of guidance, such as the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), for reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid.

Key activities

- **Promote the adoption of global good practices** and standards and pilot innovative approaches for a greener humanitarian response.
- **Enhance existing assessment methodologies** to collect and analyse data to build a data evidence base on environmental impact, energy access and related livelihood challenges.
- **Strengthen national capacity** for natural resource management, restoration and energy access through enhanced data availability and coordination.
- **Develop indicators and early warning systems** for managing forest resources in displacement settings.
- **Develop forest management plans** in targeted displacement settings for resilient and sustainable harvesting of fuelwood and other forest products, yield regulation and other forest protection measures.
- **Promote clean and efficient energy systems** to enhance access to energy for cooking and more efficient production of energy sources.
- **Support the development of regional and national strategies and response plans** to improve natural resource management, energy access and livelihood risk management for resilience and sustainability in displacement situations.

Miriam, a refugee woman from South Sudan, prepares food using briquettes in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, Uganda.

Notes

[1] **UNHCR.** 2023. More than 100 million people are forcibly displaced. In: *Refugee Data Finder.* Cited 21 March 2023. www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/100-million-forcibly-displaced.html.

[2] **UNHCR.** 2022. East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region Operational Update | In: *Operational Data Portal.* Cited 21 March 2023. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96614

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Contact

Office of Emergencies and Resilience
OER-Director@fao.org
fao.org/emergencies | @FAOemergencies

Forestry Division
NFO-Director@fao.org
fao.org/forestry | @FAOForestry

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

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